

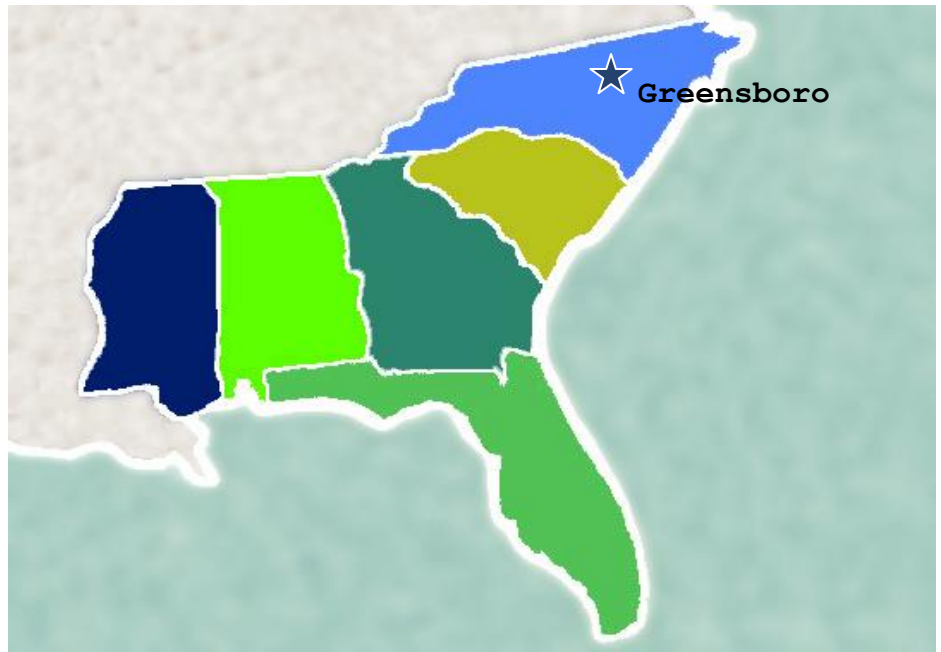
REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

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EVIDENCE BASED EDUCATION REQUEST DESK

OUR GOAL

To assist educators and policymakers in their efforts to apply the evidence base to decisions about policies, programs, and practices they encounter.



REQUEST:

- Is there any new compelling research that points to effective methods for turning around low-performing schools?

RESPONSE

Introduction

School improvement and reform has again taken center stage, both among educators and the public, due in no small part to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's call for turning around 5,000 of the lowest performing schools, coupled with a budget of approximately \$4 billion dollars in competitive grant funding to address those needs. A recent YouGov poll conducted for *The Economist* magazine between September 25–29, 2009, revealed that over 50 percent of the respondents indicated both education and health care to be “serious problems facing America” (“Reviving America’s schools: Ready, set, go,” 2009, p. 33). Further, the vast majority of those polled, nearly 70 percent, indicated that they were either “somewhat” (37.3%) or “very” (31.8%) dissatisfied “with the quality of America’s public schools” (“Reviving America’s schools,” 2009, p. 34). However, what do we know about our attempts at turning around low-performing schools? In particular, what is the state of this research base and have we sufficiently identified the evidence-based practices and strategies that produce improvement?

A recent survey of the research on school reform and turnaround efforts found that many scholars feel “rigorous research” to be “a scarce commodity” in this arena (Herman et al., 2008; Viadero, 2009, p. 10). Several researchers interviewed for the survey contend that there is a lack

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of both turnarounds and research about successful turnaround efforts in education. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University dissented, arguing that “we have more knowledge than we actually apply” to turning around our highest needs schools (Viadero, 2009, p. 10). The inability to apply the research base we presently possess is also a theme echoed by Richard Murnane of Harvard University, who recently demonstrated the gulf between two independent streams of research and how their lack of intersection is inhibiting our ability to treat issues in educating our urban children (Murnane, 2008). Or, as Randi Weingarten of the American Federation of Teachers recently asserted, the issue is failure to apply the appropriate and faithful implementation of evidence-based reform practices and policies: “Implementation...is where reform dies” (“Reviving America’s schools,” 2009, p. 34).

This EBE Request seeks to provide an overview of recent research regarding school improvement and reform with special concentration on turning around chronically low-performing schools. The response is divided into four main sections: Research on Effective Methods for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools, Frameworks for School Improvement and Turnaround, Additional Resources, and Bibliography and References. PDFs are provided for journal articles where online access is not available.

Research on Effective Methods for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools

Two recent documents by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) have provided insight into the state of the research on methods for turning around low-performing schools. ED produced a guide for educators and policymakers entitled *Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders* (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) that outlined four core areas for turnarounds to address:

1. ***Raising the Stakes: Setting High Standards for Performance:*** Holding schools accountable; and identifying low-performing schools.
2. ***Focus on Learning: Promising Strategies for Improving Student Achievement:*** Gaining control of the school environment: a prerequisite; improving curriculum and classroom instruction; starting early for school readiness; preparing for classroom change: professional development; and implementing comprehensive reform programs.
3. ***Building School Capacity: Systemic Support for the Process of Change:*** Building leadership, trust, and ownership; mobilizing resources to support school improvement; using performance data to drive continuous improvement; working in partnership with parents and community; and stimulating innovation and change.
4. ***Intervening in Chronically Low-Performing Schools:*** collaborative efforts to redesign low-performing schools; school reconstitution: a strategy of last resort; and intervention strategies: lessons and considerations.

More recently, ED’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) published a Practice Guide entitled *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* (Herman et al., 2008) through What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). This Practice Guide surveys current research (mostly case studies) and rates the studies based on IES levels of evidence criteria (Herman et al., 2008, pp. 1-3). Herman and colleagues make a distinction between school improvement and strategies addressing chronically low-performing schools or “turnaround schools” (Herman et al., 2008, p. 4). The Practice Guide focuses on turnaround and not schoolwide improvement, with the

distinction being one of degree of intensity and rate of change between the two processes. Four practices are identified and suggested as recommendations in the Practice Guide based on their survey of the research (Herman et al., 2008, pp. 8, 10–29):

1. ***Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership.*** Schools should make a clear commitment to dramatic changes from the status quo, and the leader should signal the magnitude and urgency of that change. A low-performing school that fails to make adequate yearly progress must improve student achievement within a short time frame—it does not have the luxury of years to implement incremental reforms. (*Level of evidence = low*)
2. ***Maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction.*** Chronically low-performing schools need to maintain a sharp focus on improving instruction at every step of the reform process. To improve instruction, schools should use data to set goals for instructional improvement, make changes to immediately and directly affect instruction, and continually reassess student learning and instructional practices to refocus the goals. (*Level of evidence = low*)
3. ***Make visible improvements early in the school turnaround process (quick wins).*** These can rally staff around the effort and overcome resistance and inertia. (*Level of evidence = low*)
4. ***Build a committed staff.*** The school leader must build a staff that is committed to the school’s improvement goals and qualified to carry out school improvement. This goal may require changes in staff, such as releasing, replacing, or redeploying staff who are not fully committed to turning around student performance and bringing in new staff who are committed. (*Level of evidence = low*)

These two ED documents reflect the larger literature regarding school improvement and turning around low-performing schools. Mazzeo and Berman’s (2003) best practices guide for governors published by the National Governors Association (reviewed in Herman et al., 2008) identifies five similar and overlapping principles for turning around low-performing schools (pp. 10–25):

1. ***Not all low-performing schools are the same:*** Governors should encourage state education leaders to conduct detailed assessments of the instructional programs of all schools “in need of improvement.” The state should then use this analysis to prioritize and tailor its technical- assistance resources and effectively communicate its expectations for low-performing schools.
2. ***Capacity-building must be part of the solution:*** Governors should work with state education leaders to build capacity in their state’s low-performing schools, focusing on the weakest schools. States can draw on the experience of states that have successfully implemented capacity-building strategies while asserting greater quality control in selecting and monitoring assistance providers.
3. ***Districts are essential collaborators in efforts to turn around schools:*** States should partner with districts to build the capacity of low-performing schools and encourage districts to develop systems of instructional support to serve these and other schools.
4. ***Be prepared for the long haul:*** States should provide technical assistance and support to low-performing schools for several years and continue to offer support to schools no longer designated as “in need of improvement.” States should ensure their accountability

system has the flexibility to identify when and how schools are improving and provide support to those schools accordingly.

5. ***Assistance to low-performing schools should be part of a larger strategy of school improvement:*** Governors should work to build capacity in schools by developing a comprehensive state policy strategy that aims to enhance the quality of teachers and principals, expand school choice options, and develop the state's capacity to promote school improvement.

Similar findings were reported by a Ford Foundation funded study of eight Kentucky elementary schools that served a high-needs student population and produced high-performing achievement results (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).¹ When compared to their demographically similar but low-performing counterpart schools, the eight selected elementary schools scored higher on: review and alignment of curriculum; individual student assessment and instruction tailored to individual student needs; caring, nurturing environment of high expectations for students; ongoing professional development for staff that was connected to student achievement data; and efficient use of resources and instructional time (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p. 3).

A recent study by American Institutes for Research (AIR) of the differences in low- and high-performing California public schools also found similar characteristics operating among consistently high-performing schools serving high-needs students (Pérez et al., 2007; Pérez & Socías, 2008). Of the approximately eight-thousand regular public schools, only 100 were “consistently outperforming other schools with similar characteristics year after year” (Pérez & Socías, 2008, p. 127). Among the critical findings included (Pérez & Socías, 2008, p. 126):

- Differences in school finances explained very little of the achievement gap between successful schools and other public schools in California;
- For low-performing schools, differences in teacher and administrator staff experience were stronger predictors of low performance when compared to other schools in California; and
- Successful schools differed “*from other schools mostly in terms of higher teacher quality (in aspects beyond their formal education and years of experience), higher control over the hiring of teachers, effective implementation of their curriculum using curriculum guides, data-driven decisions regarding instruction, and programs and/or interventions that complement the core curriculum*” (emphasis added; p. 126).

Four other streams of research have helped inform and develop the research on turning around low-performing schools. First, the necessity for social trust among educators, students, and parents must provide the foundation of school reform and turnaround efforts. Bryk and Schneider's pioneering work in this area highlighted four elements of social trust in schools: respect, personal regard, competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity (2003, p.

¹ The section criteria included: 50 percent or more of students on free/reduced lunch; state accountability index (a combination of academic and nonacademic indicators) of 80 or higher in 2003; state academic index (a composite of academic test scores) of 75 or higher for minority students and students on free/reduced lunch; progress on the state test over time; an achievement gap of fewer than 15 points between low- and middle-income students and between white and African-American students; and a range of types and locations of schools, such as urban/rural and geographic areas (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, p. 2).

42).² Three resulting benefits were identified in Bryk and Schneider's research that directly impact school improvement and turnaround efforts (2003, pp. 42-43):

1. Collective decisionmaking with increased teacher buy-in is more prevalent in schools that are strong in relational trust and provides a basis for reform;
2. Relational trust increases the chance that reform will diffuse broadly across the school as a result of decreasing the sense of risk associated with change, encouraging teachers to try new strategies and increasing dialog among educators; and
3. Relational trust supports the hard work of improvement.

A second stream of related research, and an element found explicitly in the research discussed thus far, is the centrality of capacity-building, generally through the vehicle of staff development (King & Newmann, 2001). The third and related stream deals with the need for program coherence, a quality which many low-performing schools lack. Chronically low-performing schools frequently are provided with a multitude of resources and opportunities but lack the capacity to coordinate such resources in a targeted fashion that conforms to broader goals. This research has provided frameworks that schools can utilize in their reform efforts (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Newmann et al., 2001).

A final and fourth element of the reform literature critical to turnaround schools is their ability (or lack thereof) to effectively partner with external collaborators and providers. Work describing the experiences and insights provided by external providers to Chicago Public Schools has been explored by Newmann and Sconzert (2000); Roderick, Easton, and Sebring (2009); and Sconzert, Smylie, and Wenzel (2004). Four central factors were found to be critical to promoting school improvement with external partners: "leadership, communication and trust, coherence and coordination, and adequate and sustained resources" (Sconzert et al., 2004, p. 45). Roderick and colleagues (2009) notes the need for external partners to fill a new role in reform efforts "to provide a research-based framework (but not a blueprint) for improvement, to provide critical measures of performance and feedback mechanisms to individual schools, and for researchers to engage in the core questions of what it will take to improve performance" (p. 3). Bryk (2009) has recently advocated for a paradigm shift in the work of school improvement with the "Design, Educational Engineering, and Development (D-EE-D) infrastructure," recognizing the need to transform education research which currently only "weakly informs the complex processes involved in improving teaching and learning" (p. 597).

In this regard, knowing that a program *can* work is not good enough; we need to know *how to make it work* reliably over many diverse contexts and situations. This means accumulating a rigorous knowledge base on practice improvement where the real test of adequacy is its capacity to advance demonstrable, broad-based improvements in teaching and learning (emphasis original; Bryk, 2009, p. 598).

Haynes (2009) reports on the March 2009 conference organized jointly by National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which "invited Andy Calkins from the Mass Insight Education and Research Institute and Sam Redding from the National Center on Innovation and Improvement to address state

² See also: Bryk and Schneider (1996, 2002); and for a more recent extension of this research, Kochanek (2005).

board of education chairs and chief state school officers on designing a coherent strategy to turn around the lowest performing schools” (p. 1). Five “broad parameters for turnaround strategies” were identified at the outset of the conference and included (Haynes, 2009, p. 2):

- Create a framework for school and district intervention based on research and best practice and develop transparent policy and agency procedures that can be used to drive improvement across all schools (e.g., through audits, accreditation processes, and procedures).
- Use longitudinal data systems to monitor student achievement in content areas and by subgroups, identify the degree of intervention and support needed, and design a system that incorporates multiple tiers or levels that differ in their nature and intensity.
- Create a set of strategies that leverage resources and consequences in order to impel districts to act independently to make improvements *before* the state has to intervene to restructure (emphasis original).
- Provide human and fiscal resources to support turnaround work by developing cadres of specialists, partners, and teams (e.g., the Virginia School Turnaround Specialist Program and the Kentucky Distinguished Educator Program).
- Implement radically improved management structures and processes and use community partnerships and services to transform the most chronically underperforming districts and schools serving the most challenged students.

Concluding her summary of the themes and insights developed at the conference, Haynes noted:

Throughout the symposium, the participants were challenged to think about three broad areas in considering effective turnaround strategies: 1) the political and communication dimensions of a school turnaround effort; 2) reorganizing state structures, policies, and processes; and 3) building capacity for turnaround efforts. States examined a range of issues that drive the level of commitment and capacity to pioneer new approaches to longstanding challenges in reducing enormous gaps in student attainment. A number of other themes surfaced, including the importance of honest and open discussion about the level of commitment to adopting comprehensive turnaround strategies; the need for greater coherence among board policies, agency procedures, and guidance to districts and schools; creating a culture of mutual accountability for mission-driven policy development and decisionmaking; expanding expertise and capacity through strategic use of networks, regional centers, partnerships, and technology; establishing a cycle of continuous evaluation and refinement to scale what works and maximize efficiencies; and building a human capital system to ensure that highly effective teachers and school leaders serve in our most challenged schools (Haynes, 2009, p. 12).

Frameworks for School Improvement and Turnaround

This section highlights two popular frameworks that outline the elements of successful school improvement and reform processes based on research conducted with high-needs schools and systems. Though both frameworks capture similar or overlapping elements, the two models have slightly different emphases. The first framework, the High-Performing, High-Poverty (HHP) Readiness Model (see Figure 1) developed by Calkins and colleagues (2007a, 2007b) places the emphasis on assessing the school's/district's readiness for change and developing "local turnaround zones" within established districts to enact reform.³ The second framework was developed by the Consortium on Chicago Schools Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago through their ongoing partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The Five Essential Supports and their subcomponents (see Figure 2) convey the elements that CCSR research and evaluation work has revealed to be critical to school improvement efforts in urban schools (Roderick et al., 2009; Sebring et al., 2006).

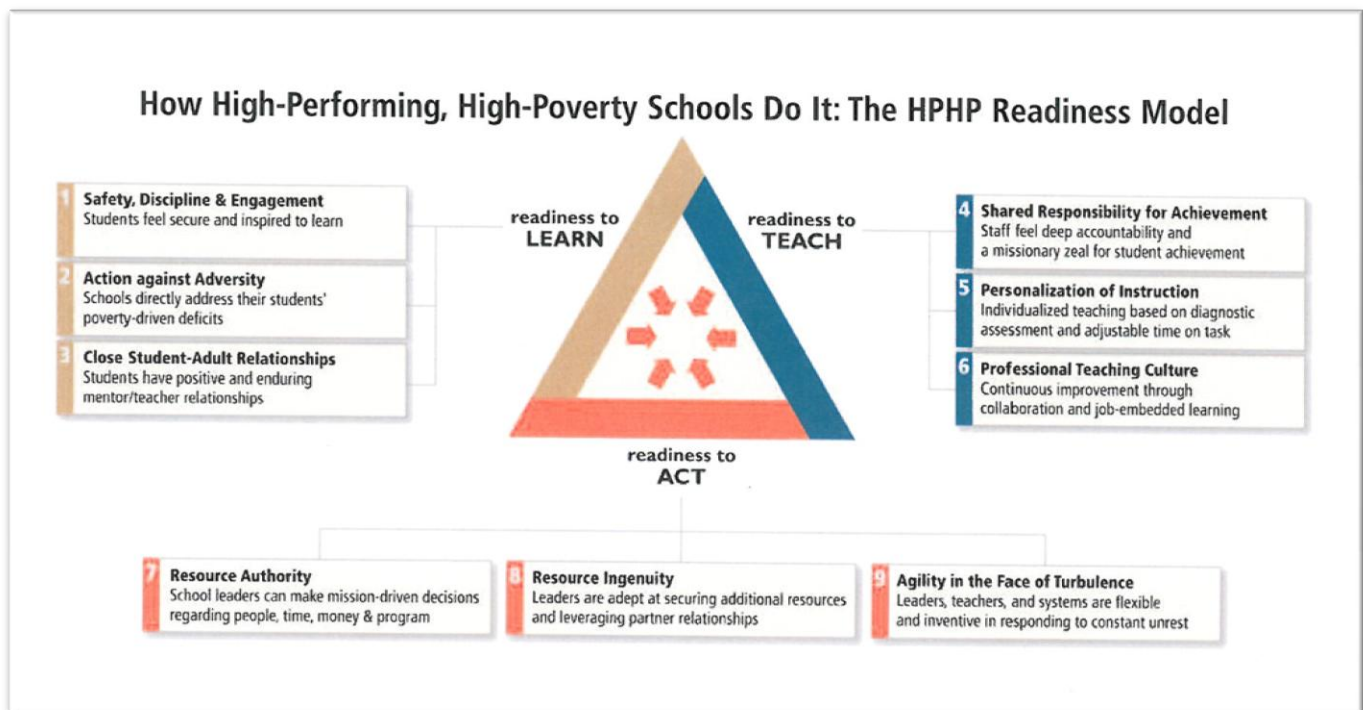


Figure 1

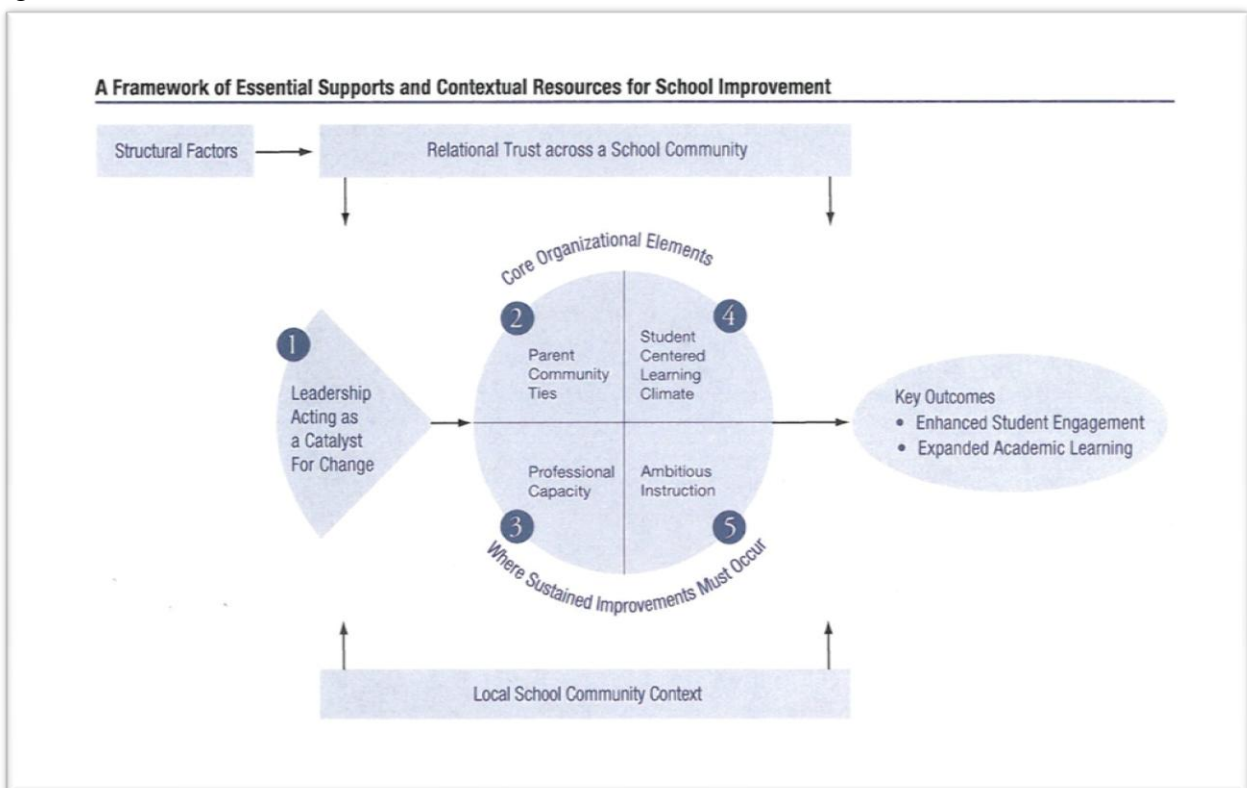
Source: Calkins et al. (2007a, p. 9)

³ See the Additional Resources section below for further materials by Calkins and others relating to this model presented at the "Turning Around the Nation's Worst Schools" conference in March 2008.

CCSR's Five Essential Supports and their subcomponents (Sebring et al., 2006, pp. 9-17):

1. **Leadership acting as a catalyst for change:**
 - a. Inclusive leadership focused on instruction
 - b. Faculty/parent/community influence
 - c. Strategic orientation
2. **Parent-community ties:**
 - a. Teachers learn about student culture and local community
 - b. Staff engages parents and community in strengthening student learning
3. **Professional capacity:**
 - a. Quality of human resources
 - b. Values and beliefs about teacher responsibility for change
 - c. Quality of professional development
 - d. Professional community
4. **Student-centered learning climate:**
 - a. Safety and order
 - b. Press towards academic achievement coupled with personal concerns for students
5. **Ambitious instruction:**
 - a. Curricular alignment
 - b. Intellectual challenge
6. Contextual resources: a climate of relational trust, a school organizational structure, and resources of the local community.

Figure 2



Source: Sebring et al. (2006, p. 10)

Additional Resources

- ***Doing what works: School improvement:***
http://dww.ed.gov/topic/topic_landing.cfm?PA_ID=11&T_ID=21
- ***Turning around the nation's worst schools:*** American Enterprise Institute conference from March 11, 2008, at the Wohlstetter Conference Center, Washington, DC, in partnership with Mass Insight Education & Research Institute (audio, PDFs, PowerPoints, and video all available): <http://www.aei.org/event/1646>

Methodology

In order to answer this request, we looked in Wilson Web (UNCG Education Database) and ERIC. In addition, we also searched Google using the phrases “effective methods for school reform,” “turning around low-performing schools,” etc. We also searched the websites of the following organizations: American Institutes for Research (AIR); Brookings; Center for Assessment/National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment; Center for Public Education; Center on Education Policy (CEP); Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); Economic Policy Institute (EPI); Educational Testing Service (ETS); Institute of Education Sciences (IES); Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.; MDRC; National Governors Association; National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), RAND Corporation; The Urban Institute; and U.S. Department of Education.

References

Belfield, C. R., & Levin, H. M. (Eds.). (2007). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Abstract: As the high cost of education draws headlines, the cost of not educating America's children goes largely ignored. *The Price We Pay* remedies this oversight by highlighting the private, fiscal, and public costs of inadequate education. Leading scholars from a broad range of fields—including economics, education, demography, and public health—attach hard numbers to the relationship between educational attainment and income, health, crime, and dependence on public assistance. They also explore policy interventions that could boost the education system's performance and explain why demographic trends make the challenge of educating our youth so urgent today. Improving educational outcomes for at-risk youth is more than a noble goal. It is an investment, one with the potential to yield benefits that far outstrip its costs. *The Price We Pay* analyzes both sides of the balance sheet and suggests which policies are most likely to pay off.

Contents: Acknowledgments -- 1 The education attainment gap: who's affected, how much, and why it matters / Clive R. Belfield and Henry M. Levin -- Part One: Assessing the scope of the challenge -- 2 Beyond educational attainment: A multifaceted approach to examining economic inequalities / Richard Rothstein and Tamara Wilder -- 3 Diversity and the demographic dividend: Achieving educational equity in an aging white society / Marta Tienda and Sigal Alon -- 4 Implications of educational inequality in a global economy / Thomas Bailey -- Part Two: Quantifying the costs of inadequate education -- 5 Consequences for the labor market / Cecilia Elena Rouse -- 6 Consequences in health status and costs / Peter Muennig -- 7 Crime and the costs of criminal justice / Enrico Moretti -- 8 Welfare and the costs of public assistance -- Jane Waldfogel, Irwin Garfinkel, and Brendan Kelly -- Part Three: Directions for reform -- 9 Educational interventions to raise high school graduation rates / Henry M. Levin and Clive R. Belfield -- 10 The promise of early childhood interventions / Clive R. Belfield -- 11 Toward excellence with equity: the role of parenting and transformative school reform / Ronald F. Ferguson -- 12 The need for comprehensive educational equity / Michael A. Rebell -- Contributors -- Index.

Link: <http://www.brookings.edu/press/Books/2007/pricewepay.aspx>

Borman, G. D. (2005). National efforts to bring reform to scale in high-poverty schools: Outcomes and implications. In L. Parker (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education*, 29 (pp. 1-28). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Abstract: Not provided. [PDF included]

Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 73(2), 125-230.

Abstract: This meta-analysis reviews research on the achievement effects of comprehensive school reform (CSR) and summarizes the specific effects of 29 widely implemented models. There are limitations on the overall quantity and quality of the research base, but the overall effects of CSR appear promising. The combined quantity, quality, and statistical significance of evidence from three models, in particular, set them apart. Whether evaluations are conducted by developers or by third-party evaluators and whether evaluators use one-group pre-post designs or control groups are important factors for understanding differences in CSR effects. Schools that implemented CSR models for 5 years or more showed particularly strong effects, and the benefits were consistent across schools of varying poverty levels. A long-term commitment to research-proven educational reform is needed to establish a strong marketplace of scientifically based CSR models. [PDF included]

Brinson, D., & Rhim, L. M. (2009). *Breaking the habit of low performance: Successful school restructuring stories*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement.

Abstract: Too often restructuring efforts fail, but these and other schools featured in this report found the right recipe for change that resulted in improved student performance and school transformation.

Link: http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Breaking_the_habit_of_low_performance.pdf

Bryk, A. S. (2009). Support a science of performance improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(8), 597-600.

Abstract: The article offers suggestions on how U.S. federal policies regarding educational research and development (R&D) can be modified to improve academic achievement. The author recommends the creation of a design, educational engineering, and development (D-EE-D) infrastructure to support the development and testing of educational innovations through a blend of action-research and systematic inquiry. He comments on how R&D systems can be applied to teacher professional development programs and teacher education through the use of professional learning communities. [PDF included]

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (1996). *Social trust: A moral resource for school improvement*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Abstract: Do trusting relationships among adults in a school help children learn? In an era of widespread distrust of educational institutions and their ability to educate children, Chicago attempted to expand local control in order to improve its schools, calling on parents, teachers, and administrators to “join together in sustained cooperative efforts around school improvement.” This report reveals that a trusting school climate is an important resource for improving teaching and learning.

Link: ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/socialtrust_amoralresourceforschoolimprovement.pdf

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Abstract: [Taken from CCSR]: Most Americans agree on the necessity of education reform, but there is little consensus about how this goal might be achieved. The rhetoric of standards and vouchers has occupied center stage, polarizing public opinion and affording little room for reflection on the intangible conditions that make for good schools. *Trust in Schools* engages this debate with a compelling examination of the importance of social relationships in the successful implementation of school reform. Over the course of three years, Bryk and Schneider, together with a diverse team of other researchers and school practitioners, studied reform in twelve Chicago elementary schools. Each school was undergoing extensive reorganization in response to the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988, which called for greater involvement of parents and local community leaders in their neighborhood schools. Drawing on years of longitudinal survey and achievement data, as well as in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and local community leaders, the authors develop a thorough account of how effective social relationships—which they term relational trust—can serve as a prime resource for school improvement. Using case studies of the network of relationships that make up the school community, Bryk and Schneider examine how the myriad social exchanges that make up daily life in a school community generate, or fail to generate, a successful educational environment. The personal dynamics among teachers, students, and their parents, for example, influence whether students regularly attend school and sustain their efforts in the difficult task of learning. In schools characterized by high relational trust, educators were more likely to experiment with new practices and work together with parents to advance improvements. As a result, these schools were also more likely to demonstrate marked gains in student learning. In contrast, schools with weak trust relations saw virtually no improvement in their reading or mathematics scores. *Trust in Schools* demonstrates convincingly that the quality of social relationships operating in and around schools is central to their functioning, and strongly predicts positive student outcomes. This book offer insights into how trust can be built and sustained in school communities, and identifies some features of public school systems that can impede such development. Bryk and Schneider show how a broad base of trust across a school community can provide a critical resource as education professional and parents embark on major school reforms.

Contents: About the Authors -- Foreword -- Acknowledgments -- Pt. I. Framing Themes and Illuminating Theory -- Ch. 1. The Social Foundations of Schooling: An Overlooked Dimension for Improvement -- Ch. 2. Relational Trust -- Pt. II. Relational Trust in Three Urban School Communities -- Ch. 3. Ridgeway Elementary School: The Costs of Conflicted Leadership -- Ch. 4. Thomas Elementary School: Cultural Diversity as an Obstacle to Trust -- Ch. 5. Holiday Elementary School: Dedicated to the Welfare of the Children -- Pt. III. Effects and Implications - - Ch. 6. Relational Trust and Improving Academic Achievement -- Ch. 7. Analytic and Policy Implications for School Reform -- Appendix A Description of the Field Study -- Appendix B Measures and Other Variables Used -- Appendix C Analysis Details -- Notes -- References -- Index.

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 40-44.

Abstract: A longitudinal study of 100 Chicago elementary schools shows the central role of relational trust in building effective education communities. [PDF included]

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. Q. (2009). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Forthcoming December 2009]

Abstract: In 1988, the Chicago public school system decentralized, granting parents and communities significant resources and authority to reform their schools in dramatic ways. To track the effects of this bold experiment, the authors of *Organizing Schools for Improvement* collected a wealth of data on elementary schools in Chicago. Over a seven-year period they identified one hundred elementary schools that had substantially improved—and one hundred that had not. What did the successful schools do to accelerate student learning? The authors of this illuminating book identify a comprehensive set of practices and conditions that were key factors for improvement, including school leadership, the professional capacity of the faculty and staff, and a student-centered learning climate. In addition, they analyze the impact of social dynamics, including crime, critically examining the inextricable link between schools and their communities. Putting their data onto a more human scale, they also chronicle the stories of two neighboring schools with very different trajectories. The lessons gleaned from this groundbreaking study will be invaluable for anyone involved with urban education.

Contents: Acknowledgments -- Prologue: A Tale of Two Schools -- Introduction: A Rare Opportunity to Learn about School Improvement -- 1 Developing Appropriate Outcome Indicators -- 2 A Framework of Essential Supports -- 3 Testing the Framework of the Essential Supports -- 4 Probing Deeper: Organizational Mechanisms -- 5 Trust, Size, and Stability: Key Enablers -- 6 The Influences of Community Context -- Summary and Conclusions -- Appendix A: Socioeconomic Status Factor -- Appendix B: A Value-Added Indicator: A School's Academic -- Productivity Profile -- Appendix C: Overview of the Fourteen Indicators for the Five Essential Supports -- Appendix D: Probability Experiment to Evaluate Results Presented in Figure 3.3 -- Appendix E: Interview Questions from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods -- Appendix F: Coefficients from Analyses of Leadership in Chapter 4 -- Appendix G: Value-Added Replication Results for 1997 through 2005 -- Appendix H: Efforts of the Consortium on Chicago School Research to Build More Productive Ties between Research, Practice, and Policy to Improve Practice -- Notes -- References -- Index.

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Kerbow, D., Rollow, S., & Easton, J. Q. (1998). *Charting Chicago school reform: Democratic localism as a lever for change*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Abstract: [Taken from CCSR]: In 1989, Chicago began an experiment with radical decentralization of power and authority. This book tells the story of what happened to Chicago's elementary schools in the first four years of this reform. Implicit in this reform is the theory that expanded local democratic participation would stimulate organizational change within schools, which in turn would foster improved teaching and learning. Using this theory as a framework, the authors marshal massive amounts of quantitative and qualitative data to examine how the reform actually unfolded at the school level. With longitudinal case study data on 22 schools, survey responses from principals and teachers in 269 schools, and supplementary system-wide administrative data, the authors identify four types of school politics: strong democracy, consolidated principal power, maintenance, and adversarial. In addition, they classify school-change efforts as either systemic or unfocused. Bringing these strands together, the authors determine that, in about a third of the schools, expanded local democratic participation served as a strong lever for introducing systemic change focused on improved instruction. Finally, case studies of six actively restructuring schools illustrate how under decentralization the principal's role is recast, social support for change can grow, and ideas and information from external sources are brought to bear on school change initiatives. Few studies intertwine so completely extensive narratives and rigorous quantitative analyses. The result is a complex picture of the Chicago reform that joins the politics of local control to school change. This volume is intended for scholars in the fields of urban education, public policy, sociology of education, anthropology of education, and politics of education. Comprehensive and descriptive, it is an engaging text for graduate students and upper-level undergraduates. Local, state, and federal policymakers who are concerned with urban education will find new and insightful material. The book should be on reading lists and in professional development seminars for school principals who want to garner community support for change and for school community leaders who want more responsive local institutions. Finally, educators, administrators, and activists in Chicago will appreciate this detailed analysis of the early years of reform.

Contents: List of Tables and Figures -- Preface -- Prologue -- 1. Framing Our Analysis: Locating Chicago School Reform Within an Institutional Change Perspective -- 2. Politics as a Lever for Organizational Change -- 3. Catalyzing Basic Organizational Change at the Building Level -- 4. Instructional Change -- 5. Testing the Basic Logic of the Chicago School Reform Act -- 6. A Closer Look at Actively Restructuring Schools -- 7. Major Lessons from the Initiating Phase of Chicago School Reform -- Appendix -- Notes -- References -- Index.

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007a). *The turnaround challenge: Why America's best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools*. Boston: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute.

Abstract: [Taken from the Executive Summary]: Despite steadily increasing urgency about the nation's lowest performing schools – those in the bottom five percent – efforts to turn these schools around have largely failed. Marginal change has led to marginal (or no) improvement. These schools, the systems supporting them, and our management of the change process require fundamental rethinking, not incremental change. What does successful school turnaround entail?

- **Recognition of the challenge.** Turnaround is a different and far more difficult undertaking than school improvement. It should be viewed within education, as it is in

other sectors, as a distinct professional discipline that requires specialized experience, training, and support.

- **Dramatic, fundamental change.** Turnaround requires transformation. Schools that effectively serve high-poverty, highly diverse student enrollments similar to those that typically attend our lowest performing schools tend to operate very differently from traditional models.
- **Urgency.** Turnaround should produce significant achievement gains within two years, while readying the school for subsequent maturation into a high-performance organization.
- **Supportive operating conditions.** Turnaround leaders must be empowered to make decisions regarding staff, schedule, budget, and program based on mission, strategy, and data.
- **New-model, high-capacity partners.** Turnaround demands skillful change management at the ground level. States, districts, and foundations must develop a new resource base of external, lead turnaround partners to integrate multiple services in support of clusters of turnaround schools.
- **New state and district structures.** Turnaround requires innovation from policymakers at all levels. States and districts should create special turnaround offices that – like turnaround schools themselves – have the flexible set of operating rules and the resources necessary to carry out their mission.

Executive Summary: This eight-page summary provides an overview of the main points and recommendations in the report. It is available for viewing and for free download as a pdf file. If you download it and print it, do so in “landscape” mode and if possible, with full-color printing for best results. *Main Report:* The full report is available for viewing and for free download as a pdf file. It is 110 pages long. If you download it and print it, do so in “landscape” mode and with two-sided printing for best results.

Link: <http://www.massinsight.org/turnaround/challenge.aspx>

Executive Summary:

http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge_ExecSumm.pdf

Main Report:

http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge_MainReport.pdf

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., Belfiore, G., & Lash, D. (2007b). *The turnaround challenge: Why America’s best opportunity to dramatically improve student achievement lies in our worst-performing schools: Supplement to the main report.* Boston: Mass Insight Education & Research Institute.

Abstract: This supplementary report provides more detailed information and profiles of school-intervention strategies in ten states and four districts, along with further analysis of high-

performing, high-poverty schools. It is 94 pages long. As with the main report, print this document in “landscape” mode and with two-side printing for best results.

Supplemental Report:

http://www.massinsight.org/DownloadHandler.ashx?fn=~/resourcefiles/TheTurnaroundChallenge_SupplementalReport.pdf

Chenoweth, K. (2007). *It's being done: Academic success in unexpected schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Abstract: This straightforward and inspiring book takes readers into schools where educators believe—and prove—that all children, even those considered “hard-to-teach,” can learn at high standards. Their teachers and principals refuse to write them off and instead show how thoughtful instruction, high expectations, stubborn commitment, and careful consideration of each child's needs can result in remarkable improvements in student achievement.

Contents: Spelunking through the data -- Frankford Elementary School, Frankford, Delaware -- University Park Campus School, Worcester, Massachusetts -- Oakland Heights Elementary School, Russellville, Arkansas -- Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School, Elmont, New York -- Lincoln Elementary School, Mount Vernon, New York -- Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School, St. Paul, Minnesota -- Centennial Place Elementary School, Atlanta, Georgia -- Lapwai Elementary School, Lapwai, Idaho -- Granger High School, Granger, Washington -- M. Hall Stanton Elementary School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania -- West Jasper Elementary School, West Jasper, Alabama -- East Millsboro Elementary School, East Millsboro, Delaware -- Capitol View Elementary School, Atlanta, Georgia -- Port Chester Middle School, Port Chester, New York -- The Benwood Initiative, Chattanooga, Tennessee -- Conclusion: what can we learn?

Chenoweth, K. (2009). *Piece by piece: How schools solved the achievement puzzle and soared*. *American Educator*, 33(3), 15-23.

Abstract: After five years of visiting high-poverty and high-minority schools that have demonstrated success, Karin Chenoweth has noticed a handful of key characteristics that these schools share: genuine teacher collaboration, a sharp focus on what students must learn, assessments that inform instruction, and strong relationships between adults and children.

Link: http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/fall2009/chenoweth.pdf

Chenoweth, K. (2009). *How it's being done: Urgent lessons from unexpected schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Abstract: *How It's Being Done* offers much-needed help to educators, providing detailed accounts of the ways in which unexpected schools—those with high-poverty and high-minority student populations—have dramatically boosted student achievement and diminished (and often eliminated) achievement gaps. *How It's Being Done* builds on Karin Chenoweth's widely hailed earlier volume, *It's Being Done*, providing specific information about how such schools have exceeded expectations and met with unprecedented levels of success.

Contents: Foreword / Pedro Noguera -- Introduction -- 1 Massachusetts Is Number One: How Did That Happen? -- 2 P.S./M.S. 124 Osmond A. Church School, Queens, New York -- 3 Imperial High School, Imperial, California -- 4 Ware Elementary School, Fort Riley, Kansas -- 5 Lockhart Junior High School, Lockhart, Texas -- 6 Norfork Elementary School, Norfork, Arkansas -- 7 Wells Elementary School, Steubenville, Ohio -- 8 Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, Roxbury, Massachusetts -- 9 Graham Road Elementary School, Falls Church, Virginia -- Conclusion: Inventing the Wheel -- Acknowledgments -- About the Author -- Index.

Designs for Change (1998). *What makes these schools stand out: Chicago elementary schools with a seven-year trend of improved reading achievement.* Chicago: Author.

Abstract: Not provided.

Summary: http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/final_summ.pdf

Full Report: <http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/SOScomplete.pdf>

Designs for Change (2005). *The big picture: School-initiated reforms, centrally initiated reforms, and elementary school achievement in Chicago (1990 to 2005).* Chicago: Author.

Abstract: The study found major achievement gains in 144 public K–8 inner city grade schools—all of them low-achieving in 1990—that have, on average, moved from 20% above the national average in 1990 to the national average of 50%. These schools are 87% low-income and serve 100,000 students—a network of radically improved schools in Chicago as large as the entire Baltimore school system. Research by DFC and others indicates the distinctive practices of these “Substantially Up Schools,” making it possible for other schools to learn from their success. The study found no significant impact on achievement of three expensive central office initiatives: school probation, grade retention (flunking), and the assignment of Reading Specialists to low-achieving schools. Study recommendations focus on the city's most overlooked resource: the city's large network of Substantially Up Schools that operate almost entirely in anonymity.

Summary: http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/BP_summ_090106.pdf

Full Report: http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/BP_rpt_092105.pdf

Foley, E., Mishook, J., Thompson, J., Kubiak, M., Supovitz, J., & Rhude-Faust, M. K. (2008). *Beyond test scores: Leading indicators for education*. Providence, RI: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Abstract: “Leading indicators” in education—as in economics—can provide early signs of progress toward academic achievement and thus help district leaders and other stakeholders make informed decisions about efforts to improve student learning—before the test results come in. A new study by the Annenberg Institute, *Beyond Test Scores: Leading Indicators for Education*, looks at four districts—Chattanooga, Montgomery County (MD), Naperville (IL), and Philadelphia—that have developed leading indicators and seeks to expand the notion of these difficult-to-quantify but important measures, such as student engagement and central office practice.

Link: <http://www.annenberginstitute.org/pdf/LeadingIndicators.pdf>

Gross, B., Booker, T. K., & Goldhaber, D. (2009). Boosting student achievement: The effect of comprehensive school reform on student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(2), 111-126.

Abstract: Between the late 1980s and early 2000s, schools, districts, states, and the federal government devoted enormous resources to the implementation of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models. With more than 1.6 billion federal dollars distributed through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR) project and its successor, the CSR project, states and districts made CSR adoption a central reform strategy for their lowest performing schools. Today, however, federal funding for CSR has dried up, and this policy has been left behind with few explicit efforts to assess the effect of these CSR funds on schools. In this article, the authors look back on this federal reform initiative and the effect it had on Texas students. Using promising analytic techniques for nonexperimental studies to investigate the effects of federal CSR awards on student achievement, the authors find that CSR funding did not significantly affect students’ reading performance and that its effect on math performance varied across different student types. [PDF included]

Hanson, M. R., & Moore, D. R. (2003). *Rachel Carson Elementary School: An exemplary urban school that teaches children to read*. Chicago: Designs for Change.

Abstract: An in-depth research study that analyzes how Chicago’s Carson Elementary School has achieved exceptional student achievement results, with a special emphasis on how Carson teaches children to read. Carson’s 1,240 students are 99% low-income, and two-thirds of them speak little or no English when they enter school. Yet in spring 2003, 68% of Carson’s eighth graders met or exceeded the national average on the Iowa Reading Test, and 73% did the same in math.

Summary: http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/carson_summ.pdf

Full Report: <http://www.designsforchange.org/pdfs/Carsonsept03.pdf>

Haynes, M. (2009, June). *NASBE Policy Update: State strategies for turning around low-performing schools and districts*, 17(7). Arlington, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Abstract: Despite decades of reform, states continue to struggle with how best to assist failing schools and districts. This policy update by the National Association of State Boards of Education offers ways for state education leaders to frame a coherent state response. The brief, which summarizes a conference on this topic in March 2009 hosted by NASBE and the Council of Chief State School Officers, includes a summary of a panel on recent turnaround efforts in Massachusetts and Maryland, moderated by Richard Laine, the Wallace Foundation's director of education programs.

Link:

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Documents/State-Strategies-for-Turning-Around-Low-Performing-Schools.pdf>

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., et al. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide* (NCEE #2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Abstract: This guide identifies practices that can improve the performance of chronically low-performing schools—a process commonly referred to as creating “turnaround schools.” The four recommendations in this guide work together to help failing schools make adequate yearly progress.

Link: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/Turnaround_pg_04181.pdf

Honig, M. I., & Hatch, T. C. (2004). *Crafting coherence: How schools strategically manage multiple, external demands*. *Educational Researcher*, 33(8), 16-30.

Abstract: “Policy coherence” is an often cited but seldom achieved education policy goal. We argue that addressing this policy-practice gap requires a reconceptualization of coherence not as the objective alignment of external requirements but as a dynamic process. This article elaborates this re-conceptualization using theories of institutional and organizational change and empirical illustrations from literature on school reform and education policy implementation. We define coherence as a process, which involves schools and school district central offices working together to craft or continually negotiate the fit between external demands and schools’ own goals and strategies. Crafting coherence includes: schools setting schoolwide goals and strategies

that have particular features; schools using those goals and strategies to decide whether to bridge themselves to or buffer themselves from external demands; and school district central offices supporting these school-level processes. This definition suggests new directions for policy research and practice. [PDF included]

Jacob, B., & Ludwig, J. (2008). *Improving educational outcomes for poor children* (Working Paper No. 14550). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Abstract: This review paper, prepared for the forthcoming Russell Sage volume *Changing Poverty*, considers the ability of different education policies to improve the learning outcomes of low-income children in America. Disagreements on this question stem in part from different beliefs about the problems with our nation's public schools. In our view there is some empirical support for each of the general concerns that have been raised about public schools serving high-poverty student populations, including: the need for more funding for those school inputs where additional spending is likely to pass a benefit-cost test; limited capacity of many schools to substantially improve student learning by improving the quality of instruction on their own; and the need for improved incentives for both teachers and students, and for additional operational flexibility. Evidence suggests that the most productive changes to existing education policies are likely to come from increased investments in early childhood education for poor children, improving the design of the federal No Child Left Behind accountability system, providing educators with incentives to adopt practices with a compelling research base while expanding efforts to develop and identify effective instructional regimes, and continued support and evaluation of a variety of public school choice options. [PDF included]

Link: <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2790/papers/w14550.pdf>

Kannapel, P. J., & Clements, S. K. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing high-poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Abstract: High academic achievement by students in high-poverty schools is generally not the case in Kentucky or throughout the nation. But some schools do succeed at helping all their students achieve, regardless of their background or socioeconomic conditions. This study, conducted for the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence with funding from the Ford Foundation, looks at a group of these high-poverty, high-performing schools in Kentucky to determine how they break the usual pattern of low achievement. It is hoped that the lessons from these exceptional schools will be helpful for other educators who face similar challenges.

Link: <http://www.cdl.org/resource-library/pdf/FordReportJE.pdf>

King, M. B., & Newmann, F. M. (2001). Building school capacity through professional development: Conceptual and empirical considerations. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(2), 86-93.

Abstract: Situates current research on professional development within an organizational perspective. Offers a framework for the study of professional development and proposes that key factors that affect student achievement be conceptualized as school capacity. Argues that increases in school capacity will lead to gains in student achievement and that professional development should, therefore, be designed to enhance the following three dimensions of capacity. First, school capacity includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of individual staff members. Second, the diverse human and technical resources of a school need to be put to use in an organized, collective enterprise termed school professional community. Finally, a school's capacity is enhanced when its programs for student and staff learning are coherent, focused, and sustained. To illustrate comprehensive professional development that addresses all aspects of school capacity, describes one school from a current study. [PDF included]

Kochanek, J. R. (2005). *Building trust for better schools: Research-based practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Abstract: Kochanek links the growth of trust with positive outcomes that benefit schools, such as increased participation, greater openness to innovations, boosts in parent outreach, and higher academic productivity.

Contents: Foreword, Anthony S. Bryk -- 1 Introduction: Making a case for trust -- 2 Trust building as a developmental process -- 3 MacNeil Elementary School: Improving a high-trust school -- 4 Mills Elementary School: Starting from a lack of trust -- 5 Cole Magnet Elementary School: Coming back to trust -- 6 An examination of trust building through quantitative analyses -- 7 Implementing trust-building strategies in your school -- Resource A: CCSR relational trust measures -- Resource B: Measures of key concepts of trust building.

Lee, V. E., & Smith, J. B. (1999). Social support and achievement for young adolescents in Chicago: The role of school academic press. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 907-945.

Abstract: This study explores whether the social support that young adolescents may draw on for their academic activities is related to how much they learn in mathematics and reading over the course of a year. Data came from 1997 survey reports collected by the Consortium for Chicago School Research from 30,000 sixth and eighth graders in 304 Chicago public elementary schools about the support these students receive from their teachers, their parents, their peers, and their neighborhoods and from annual standardized tests conducted by the Chicago Public Schools. Using hierarchical linear modeling methods, we found that, on average, social support is positively but modestly related to learning. However, both learning and the relationship between social support and learning are contingent on the academic press of the school students attend. Findings are discussed within the context of school reform policies focusing on increasing social support. [PDF included]

Lee, V. E., Smith, J. B., Perry, T. E., & Smylie, M. A. (1999). *Social support, academic press, and student achievement: A view from the middle grades in Chicago*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Abstract: This report from the Chicago Annenberg Research Project focuses on the relationships of student social support and school academic press to gains in student achievement. Analyses of citywide survey data and achievement test scores of sixth and eighth grade students in Chicago reveal that students learn most when they experience both strong academic press in their schools and strong social support from people in and out of their schools. By contrast, if one of these conditions is strong and the other is weak, students learn less, and if both are weak, their academic achievement is comparatively small. The report pairs these findings with examples from fieldwork that illustrate steps schools can take to strengthen both social support and academic press to promote student learning. This report challenges “either-or” proposals for school reform that view academic rigor and social support for students as contradictory strategies. Instead, it argues that student social support and school academic press are complementary strategies that work best in tandem.

Link: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0e01.pdf>

Louis, K. S. (2005). *Organizing for school change*. New York: Routledge.

Abstract: Improving education is a key priority for governments around the world. Though many suggestions on how best to achieve this are currently under debate, years of academic research have already revealed more about how to encourage change than is sometimes assumed. This volume brings together for the first time some of the most significant work of Karen Seashore Louis, one of the foremost thinkers and researchers in the field. *Organizing for School Change* presents a unique variety of research-based results from studies conducted over the past twenty-five years. What emerges is not an idealistic plan, but a realistic picture of what needs to be done if schools are to be made better. Drawing on a wide and comprehensive list of sources, the ideas brought together in this collection will prove invaluable and insightful reading, stimulating both newcomers and veterans of the field to consider educational research in new ways.

Contents: Foreword, Andy Hargreaves and Kathryn Riley -- Part 1. The Process of Change and Innovation -- 1. Knowledge Use and School Improvement -- 2. Permanent Innovations: Theoretical and administrative issues in institutionalizing change -- 3. Planning Improvement Efforts -- 4. Reforming Schools: Does the myth of Sisyphus apply? -- 5. Beyond ‘Managed Change’: Rethinking how schools improve -- 6. Organizational Learning and High Performance Learning Communities -- Part 2. Teachers in Changing Schools -- 7. Cultivating Teacher Engagement: Breaking the iron law of social class -- 8. Effects of Teacher Quality of Work Life on Commitment and Sense of Efficacy -- 9. Does Professional Community Affect the Classroom? Teacher’ work and student work in restructuring schools -- 10. The Problem of Reform in Urban High Schools: A tale of two teams -- Part 3. Organizational Perspectives on Innovation and Change -- 11. Adoption Revisited: Decision-making and school district policy -- 12. Creating Community in Reform: Images of organizational learning in urban schools -- 13. A

Culture Framework for Education: Defining quality values for U.S. high schools -- 14.
Organizational Culture and Change: The impact of mental models, professional community, and interdisciplinary teaming on teacher practice -- Part 4. Educational Knowledge in Action -- 15.
Policy Research in a Policy Vacuum -- 16. Improving Urban and Disadvantaged Schools: Dissemination and utilization perspectives -- 17. Reconnecting Knowledge Utilization and School Improvement: Two steps forward, one step back.

Mazzeo, C., & Berman, I. (2003). *Reaching new heights: Turning around low-performing schools - A guide for governors*. Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

Abstract: For more than a decade, governors have been calling for an end to academically deficient schools and the elimination of the achievement gap. With gubernatorial leadership, states have devised and implemented accountability systems to identify, prioritize, and assist schools that need improvement. These efforts have shown some initial success, but states continue to refine their school-improvement programs to increase their effectiveness.

Link: <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0803REACHING.pdf>

Meehan, M. L., & Cowley, K. S. (2003). *A study of low-performing schools, high-performing schools, and high-performing learning communities*. Paper presented at the Hawaii International Conference on Education, Waikiki, HI. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED475495)

Abstract: Targets of educational reform in the United States have included classroom teachers, students, and school structure. Increasingly, nonstructural aspects of schooling are being examined as avenues to educational improvement. The purpose of this study was to investigate differences among professional staff members' perceptions of being in a continuous mode of learning and improvement in low- and high-performing schools and in high-performing learning communities. Data were collected and analyzed from questionnaires sent to the faculty members of 45 low-performing schools in Alabama and 48 high-performing schools in Kentucky. Results show that in low-performing schools across both states, professional staff members identify the area of school/family/community connections as being most in need of learning and improvement, and that high-performing schools are not necessarily high-performing learning communities. Because staff members in high-performing schools always scored higher in questionnaire-scaled responses than staff members in low-performing schools, it is concluded that measuring a faculty's commitment to continuous learning and improvement is one effective way to assess the reculturing of a school's professional staff. Recommendations include repeating this study with schools in other states and doing longitudinal studies, among other designs.

Link:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/1a/f7/c0.pdf

Murnane, R. (2008). *Educating urban children* (Working Paper No. 13791). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Abstract: For a variety of reasons described in the paper, improving the performance of urban school districts is more difficult today than it was several decades ago. Yet economic and social changes make performance improvement especially important today. Two quite different bodies of research provide ideas for improving the performance of urban school districts. One group of studies, conducted primarily by scholars of organizational design, examines the effectiveness of particular district management strategies. The second, conducted primarily by economists, focuses on the need to improve incentives. Each body of research offers important insights. Each is somewhat insensitive to the importance of the insights offered by the other literature. A theme of this paper is that insights from both literatures are critical to improving urban school systems. [PDF included]

Link: <http://libproxy.uncg.edu:2790/papers/w13791.pdf>

Murphy, J., & Meyers, C. V. (2008). *Turning around failing schools: Leadership lessons from the organizational sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press; National Staff Development Council; American Association of School Administrators.

Abstract: Provides an in-depth examination of the causes and symptoms of degeneration and a two-part model for preventing educational collapse and crafting an effective turnaround.

Contents: Preface -- About the Authors -- Part I: An Introduction -- Ch. 1 - A Framework for Understanding Turnaround -- Part II: Decline and Failure -- Ch. 2 - Symptoms of Decline -- Ch. 3 - Causes of Organizational Failure -- Ch. 4 - Crisis, Consequences, and Dysfunctional Reactions -- Ch. 5 - Context and Analytic Frames for Turnarounds -- Part III: Retrenchment -- Ch. 6 - Getting the Right Leadership -- Ch. 7 - Diagnosing the Situation and Taking Emergency Action -- Part IV: Recovery -- Ch. 8 - Pathways to Recovery: Operational Vision, Efficiencies, and Organizational Processes -- Ch. 9 - Organizational Work Ethic and Products -- Part V: Understanding Turnarounds in Schools -- Ch. 10 - Turning Around Failing Schools: The Landscape -- Ch. 11 - Turning Around Failing Schools: The Evidence -- References -- Index.

Newmann, F. M. (1993). *Beyond common sense in educational restructuring: The issues of content and linkage*. *Educational Researcher*, 22(2), 4-13, 22.

Abstract: Common sense proposals for restructuring schools suggest promising directions, but in order for this potential to be fulfilled, two major issues must be addressed: What content is needed to give educational direction to the structures, and how can the many factors that influence this content be linked? This article proposes an agenda of content for teacher commitment and competence, and it identifies four problems of systemic linkage that

restructuring “theory” has yet to address. Solutions to each of these issues will require resolution of persisting conflict over education goals. [PDF included]

Newmann, F. M., & Associates (1996). *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Abstract: This book presents the findings of a five-year, federally funded study that examined the connection between school restructuring and student achievement. Using a wealth of examples, the authors provide a vivid picture of the conditions under which innovations in a school’s organization contribute to achievement. They recommend standards for reaching student intellectual quality and offer evidence of how these standards work.

Contents: Introduction: The School Restructuring Study / Fred M. Newmann -- 1. Standards for Authentic Achievement and Pedagogy / Gary G. Wehlage, Fred M. Newmann and Walter G. Secada -- 2. Does Authentic Pedagogy Increase Student Achievement? / Helen M. Marks, Fred M. Newmann and Adam Gamoran -- 3. Careen and Lamar Elementary Schools / Kenneth B. Doane -- 4. Red Lake and Okanagon Middle Schools / Kenneth B. Doane -- 5. Cibola and Island High Schools / Kenneth B. Doane -- 6. Intellectual Quality / Fred M. Newmann, M. Bruce King and Walter G. Secada -- 7. Schoolwide Professional Community / Karen Seashore Louis, Sharon D. Kruse and Helen M. Marks -- 8. Support for Student Achievement / Helen M. Marks, Kenneth B. Doane and Walter G. Secada -- 9. Pathways to Equity / Walter G. Secada, Adam Gamoran and Matthew G. Weinstein -- 10. Participatory Decision Making / M. Bruce King, Karen Seashore Louis, Helen M. Marks and Kent D. Peterson -- 11. Support from External Agencies / Gary G. Wehlage, Eric Osthoff and Andrew C. Porter -- Conclusion: Restructuring for Authentic Student Achievement / Fred M. Newmann and Gary G. Wehlage -- App. A. Design of the School Restructuring Study -- App. B. Features of the SRS Schools -- App. C. SRS Researchers, Support Staff, and National Advisory Panel.

Newmann, F. M., & Sconzert, K. (2000). *School improvement with external partners*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Abstract: The Chicago Annenberg Challenge was formed in 1995 as part of the national Annenberg Challenge, a project aimed at improving public schools across the United States. Since its beginnings, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge has pursued school reform through intermediary organizations—community- or university-based external partners—linked to networks of schools. This report presents the findings of a study of nine Chicago Annenberg External Partners, their accomplishments, strategies, and the difficulties they face. In addition, this report discusses the implications of these findings for the ongoing work of external partners and organizations that support them.

Link: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0c01.pdf>

Newmann, F. M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A. S. (2001). Instructional program coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(4), 297-321.

Abstract: We present the concept of instructional program coherence and explain why school improvement frameworks that incorporate instructional program coherence are more likely to advance student achievement than multiple, unrelated efforts. We present evidence that Chicago elementary schools with stronger instructional program coherence make higher gains in student achievement. We also share observations on how, in specific schools, principals and external partners directed key school resources toward the development of instructional program coherence. In closing, we discuss factors within the educational system that discourage instructional program coherence and suggest ways that school leaders, school-improvement partners, and policymakers can support greater instructional program coherence. [PDF included]

Pérez, M., Anand, P., Speroni, C., Parrish, T., Esra, P., Socías, M., et al. (2007). *Successful California schools in the context of educational adequacy*. Palo Alto, CA: American Institutes for Research.

Abstract: [Taken from the Executive Summary]: This report presents the results from a seven-month study of successful schools in California performed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR). This study is part of a larger group of studies coordinated through Stanford University and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. The study explored some of the concepts underlying the “successful schools” approach to defining education adequacy and considered their implications for analyzing educational adequacy in California. The overall purpose of the paper is summarized in the following research questions:

- How has the successful schools approach been used to consider educational adequacy?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these alternative applications?
- How might successful schools be identified in the state?
- What resource differences are observed or reported by these schools?
- Can we predict academic performance by levels of resources and types of students enrolled?
- Is there any evidence that successful schools use their resources more efficiently?
- What other factors appear related to their success?
- What are the implications of these findings for defining education adequacy in California?

The successful schools approach seeks to determine the cost of the education needed to reach a specified level of educational outcomes by identifying districts achieving these outcomes and determining how much they are spending. This study sought to improve on this basic approach by selecting schools that have been consistently performing at a higher level than the one predicted by their demographics, rather than selecting successful schools that are above an absolute level of performance in a given year or over a given period of time. We analyzed these schools that were “beating the odds” (BTO) with regard to student achievement and compared

them to low-performing (LP) schools—schools that had been performing at a lower level than predicted by their demographics. We also conducted telephone interviews with a total of 23 schools from both groups in an attempt to understand their resource allocation practices and to identify common themes in the factors principals deemed necessary for success. In short, what we have found is that the answer to success across the BTO schools in this study is complex. It is not simply more resources or the application of a certain recipe in regard to resource allocation practices. However, what we found in this analysis is not new. Our findings are similar in many ways to those of other research that have investigated the differences between relatively successful and unsuccessful schools. And although the linkage between the existence of high-quality teachers and school success seems somewhat obvious, the findings Successful California Schools in the Context of Educational Adequacy American Institutes for Research Page vii from this report suggest that such staff can be attracted to schools with high concentrations of students with special needs (e.g., students in poverty and English learners). To attract them we need to create an environment in which they believe they have a chance to be successful. Some resource considerations in relation to this may be stable leadership, district support, and discretion at the local level in regard to being able to attract and retain other high-quality teachers and to remove those who prove to be ineffective. From an overall adequacy perspective, our findings seem to challenge the basic underlying premise that the primary element that is lacking in regard to realizing state outcome goals is directly related to the quantities (or even to the attributes) of educational resources. It may be that simply adding more resources will be unlikely to make a difference in regard to school performance. This would suggest a somewhat different conceptualization of the adequacy question than has been commonly employed. Undoubtedly, there are certain minimum levels of resources that are imperative for school success. Beyond this, however, we may need to broaden this perspective to begin specifying adequate conditions for schools' success. To examine this further, we may need resource measures that, at least in California, we do not currently have. For example, we do not have measures of the stability of leadership and instructional staff at the school. We do not know the degree to which there is latitude for schools to select, retain, and remove teachers as needed to ensure a "quality" staff. We have insufficient measures to ensure district support for high needs schools—e.g., ensuring that they have at least equal resources in comparison to all schools in the district. In summary, identifying and analyzing BTO schools has provided insight into our overall conceptualization of educational adequacy. The basic underlying premise for adequacy as it has been largely defined and applied is that we simply need a better understanding of the levels of resources needed to reach a specified educational outcome standard. The analyses in this report suggest that at least for the pool of schools realizing this level of success at a much greater rate than their counterparts, traditional resource measures do not seem to be what are making the difference. This does not lead to the conclusion that resources do not matter. All of these schools do have resources at a certain specified level; none would likely say that they could continue to perform at this level with less, and most would probably argue for more. Perhaps existing adequacy frameworks would benefit from considering more broadly the mix of schoolwide staff attributes, as well as counts of staff and non-personnel resources, needed in a school to be truly adequate for success. The state can further this agenda through more comprehensive data collection in regard to the broader sets of attributes and performance measures that are needed to better understand the full resource implications of schools' success.

Link: <http://www.air.org/publications/documents/Successful%20California%20Schools.pdf>

Pérez, M., & Socías, M. (2008). Highly successful schools: What do they do differently and at what cost? *Education Finance and Policy*, 3(1), 109-129.

Abstract: An underlying premise of many resource adequacy studies is that reaching a specified set of educational outcomes is directly dependent on the level of resources. This article analyzes resource allocation practices among successful schools, low-performing schools, and average public schools in California. We find that differences in traditional resource measures are not able to explain the sharp differences in student achievement among these schools. While unmeasured differences in student characteristics in these schools may explain part of the difference in achievement, the schools also differ dramatically in their effectiveness even though they have very similar expenditure levels. The conclusion is not that resources do not matter. They do, but only when used wisely. This article also delves into what successful schools are doing that might explain their success. [*PDF included*]

Reviving America's schools: Ready, set, go. (2009, Oct. 3). *The Economist*, 392, 33-34.

Abstract: The article focuses on Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education in the administration of President Barack Obama. Duncan is attempting to use some of the funds appropriated to education aid in the 2009 economic stimulus legislation to assist schools in experimenting with educational reforms. Assistance will be targeted towards schools rated as performing poorly.

Link: http://www.economist.com/world/unitedstates/displayStory.cfm?story_id=14548891

Roderick, M., Easton, J. Q., & Sebring, P. B. (2009). *Consortium on Chicago School Research: A new model for the role of research in supporting urban school reform*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Abstract: The Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago was founded in 1990, two years after the passage of the Chicago School Reform Act that decentralized governance of the city's public schools. Since then, CCSR has distinguished itself as a unique organization, conducting research of high technical quality that is accessible to practitioners and policymakers and that is used broadly by the school-reform community. Most importantly, CCSR is viewed as making important contributions to school reform, both through the findings and implications of specific research studies and more broadly by improving the capacity of the district to use data, build effective strategies, and evaluate progress. In this report, we argue that CCSR's focus on building capacity for school reform both sets CCSR's role apart from traditional approaches researchers have used to influence policy and practice and also represents a new model for conducting policy-relevant research. The report begins with a brief background of CCSR. We then describe how a focus on capacity building has been institutionalized in a specific set of organizational arrangements that allow us to establish coherence across studies, seek broad stakeholder engagement, and make findings accessible. We argue further that developing new roles for research is increasingly important in new policy environments that depend significantly on the capacity of teachers and principals to not only

respond to incentives and accountability but also to manage decentralized decisionmaking and school-improvement efforts.

Link: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/CCSR%20Model%20Report-final.pdf>

Sconzert, K., Smylie, M. A., & Wenzel, S. A. (2004). *Working for school improvement: Reflections of Chicago Annenberg external partners*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Abstract: In 1995, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge launched a six-year initiative to improve Chicago Public Schools. The Challenge's primary strategy was to group schools with common interests and needs into networks. Each network was paired with an external partner—an individual, group, or organization—to help strengthen school leadership and promote local school improvement. This report draws on the experiences and insights of a sample of Chicago Annenberg external partners. The partners discuss what they learned about the challenges of working with schools, keys to successful school improvement, causes of failure, and the supports needed to work effectively with schools. These perspectives are useful for understanding how those working closely with schools see the task of school improvement and for understanding the role of partners in promoting improvement in the future.

Link: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p71.pdf>

Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Bryk, A. S. Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2006). *The essential supports for school improvement*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Abstract: In this report, which draws on data from Chicago public elementary schools in the 1990s, the authors present a framework of essential supports and community resources that facilitate school improvement. The authors provide evidence on how the essential supports contribute to improvements in student learning, and they investigate how community circumstances impact schools' ability to embrace the essential supports. The authors offer empirical evidence on the five essential supports—leadership, parent-community ties, professional capacity, student-centered learning climate, and ambitious instruction—and investigate the extent to which strength in the essential supports was linked to improvements in student learning, and the extent to which weakness was linked to stagnation in learning gains. The authors also find that a school's capacity for improvement is heavily influenced by its community context. Although improving and stagnating schools were found in all different communities, those with particularly strong social capital and low crime rates were likely to have schools with strong essential supports, whereas those with weak social capital were likely to have weak essential supports in their schools. Social capital, in addition to the presence of abuse and neglect among children in the community, impacted the essential supports in complex ways, which the authors describe in detail. Marshalling a wide variety of evidence—CCSR's biannual surveys of CPS; standardized test scores; and data from the Chicago Police Department, the Chapin Hall Center for Children, and the Project on Human Development in Chicago

Neighborhoods—the authors set forth a framework for guiding school-improvement efforts and illustrate the barriers that stand in the way of this task.

Link: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/EssentialSupports.pdf>

Sebring, P. B., & Bryk, A. S. (2000). School leadership and the bottom line in Chicago. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(6), 440-443.

Abstract: A study of Chicago school reform revealed that principals of productive elementary schools skillfully use various strategies to promote parents' and teachers' work with children. These include resolving highly visible problems quickly, focusing on the instructional core, adopting strategic orientation, attacking incoherence, involving parents, and advocating professionalism. [PDF included]

Stecher, B. M., Epstein, S., Hamilton, L. S., Marsh, J. A., Robyn, A., McCombs, J. S., et al. (2008). *Pain and gain: Implementing No Child Left Behind in three states, 2004-2006* (MG-784-NSF). Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Abstract: The Implementing Standards-Based Accountability (ISBA) study was designed to examine the strategies that states, districts, and schools are using to implement standards-based accountability under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and how these strategies are associated with classroom practices and student achievement in mathematics and science. This monograph presents the final results of the ISBA project. It contains descriptive information regarding the implementation of NCLB in California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania from 2003–2004 through 2005–2006. It is a companion to MG-589-NSF, Standards-Based Accountability Under No Child Left Behind (2007), and updates those findings with an additional year of data, permitting further analyses of state-to-state differences and longer-term trends. This study suggests that school-improvement efforts might be more effective if they were responsive to local conditions and customized to address the specific causes of failure and the capacity of the schools in question.

Link: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG784.pdf

Togneri, W. (2003). *Beyond islands of excellence: What district can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools – A leadership brief*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance.

Abstract: The Brief is geared to district leaders and policymakers and highlights key findings and recommendations from the complete Beyond Islands of Excellence study.

Link: <http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/districts/>

Togneri, W., & Anderson, S. E. (2003). *Beyond islands of excellence: What districts can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance.

Abstract: The report outlines lessons from five high-poverty districts with a record of increasing student achievement. The report identifies a set of practical steps that schools and districts can take to move beyond a few excellent schools to success across entire systems.

Link: <http://www.learningfirst.org/publications/districts/>

U.S. Department of Education (1998). *Turning around low-performing schools: A guide for state and local leaders*. Washington, DC: Author.

Abstract: This guide describes various strategies that states and districts are pursuing to help turn around low-performing schools and raise expectations for all students. Strategies include helping schools gain control of the learning environment, concentrating resources and efforts on providing students with challenging curricula and high-quality instruction, providing services to ensure school readiness, creating a professional development program aligned with curricular content and focused on instructional improvement, and helping schools implement comprehensive school reform programs. It is also important to build underachieving schools' organizational capacity by ensuring strong school leadership, promoting policies that encourage teacher commitment to reform, using resources strategically, helping schools use performance data to drive improvement, involving the community, and providing incentives for change and support for innovation. Initiatives in New York State, Chicago, and San Francisco provide successful examples. President Clinton has also suggested initiatives to improve student achievement, including educational opportunity zones, reduced class size, the America Reads Challenge, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and a school-construction initiative to modernize buildings and alleviate overcrowding.

Link: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/turning/index.html>

Viadero, D. (2009, Aug. 12). Research doesn't offer much guidance on turnarounds. *Education Week*, 28, 10.

Abstract: The article discusses the lack of research-based strategies for school turnarounds in the context of major federal funding for turnarounds by the U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top Fund. The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) differentiates school-improvement programs, which are gradual, from turnarounds, which emphasize quick results from strong leadership. The Institute has launched three research programs to identify promising practices. [PDF included]

Walberg, H. J. (Ed.) (2007). *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement*. Charlotte, NC: The Academic Development Institute and Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Abstract: As suggested by the title, the purpose of this *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* is to provide principles for restructuring and substantially improving schools. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) engaged leading experts on restructuring and school improvement to prepare modules for this handbook to assist states, districts, and schools in establishing policies, procedures, and support to successfully restructure schools. The *Handbook* is organized into three sections. The topic of the *Handbook's* modules—restructuring with a focus on the district as the impetus for dramatic improvement—is relatively new in the nation's education history. For this reason, the module authors were selected because they are highly experienced experts in their fields and can be counted on to judiciously weigh the less than definitive evidence and to state useful guiding principles.

Contents: Preface / Herbert J. Walberg, Editor -- Section 1: Overview of Restructuring -- Overview of Restructuring / Bryan Hassel, Emily Hassel, and Lauren Morando Rhim -- Section 2: Topical Modules -- District-Wide Framework for Improvement / Kenneth K. Wong -- The School Board and Central Office in District Improvement / Gordon Cawelti and Nancy Protheroe -- Restructuring Options and Change Processes / Carole L. Perlman -- Restructuring Through Learning-Focused Leadership / Joseph Murphy -- Changing and Monitoring Instruction / Herbert J. Walberg -- Systems for Improved Teaching and Learning / Sam Redding -- Section 3: Indicators of Successful Restructuring -- Indicators of Successful Restructuring / Sam Redding.

Link (Center on Innovation & Improvement PDF version):

<http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Restructuring%20Handbook.pdf>



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